



# news

edition 19

In this issue... WebOscar - web publishing - audio samples - track listings... and more!

## Audio Clips

Imagine a system where a customer can hear a sample from any track on any CD in the store! Well now they can, thanks to *WebOscar's* unique audio capture and "listening post" facilities.

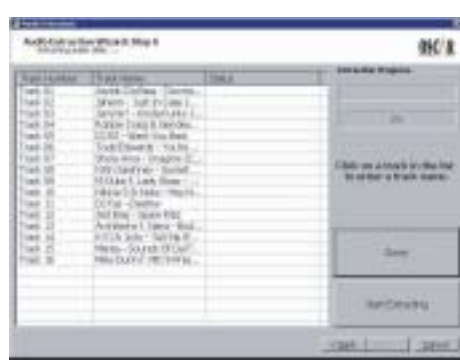
Traditional listening posts rely on playing a limited selection of CDs or pre-recorded tracks. Now, retailers can ensure that all of their music stock is available for sample listening on demand.



• First, scan the bar code...



and insert the CD...



Then download the track names...



And sample the tracks.

This facility allows customers to hear before they buy and even allows them to hear tracks from their purchases as they make them!

*WebOscar* is unique because it links audio tracks to the Epos system's music catalogue, eliminating wasteful duplication and ensuring that product information only has to be captured once.

Sound clips can be played over any terminal in the Oscar network and are chosen either by scanning the product barcode or by searching for song title, album title, artist, or catalogue number. Customers can listen to their choice on headphones or the shop's music system.

*WebOscar* is an Internet enabled system and audio track data is immediately available for publication on the retailer's web site.

For larger stores, a special Oscar terminal, the Oscar Listening Post, is available for operation by customers and is complete with barcode scanners and catalogue search facilities.

*WebOscar* works by automatically copying time-limited samples of audio tracks and holding them in a secure form on the Oscar system server.

*WebOscar's* unique design allows it to search the internet for additional information about each recording, including track names which are attached automatically to the recorded samples wherever possible.

The entire sampling process takes only a few minutes for each album and is completely automatic, allowing the retailer to quickly build up a comprehensive track library. It is even possible to continue the sampling process while simultaneously using the same Oscar terminal to serve customers!

*WebOscar* is not limited to digital recordings: facilities are provided for audio capture from Vinyl, tape and other media that are not compatible with CD standards.

Best of all, the retailer's track catalogue is not subject to third party licensing costs, or even worse, someone else's idea of what the content should be!

Of course, the retailer must enter into suitable agreements with the appropriate recording and performance societies. For copyright protection reasons, clips are normally limited to 30 seconds.

## Audio on the Internet

*WebOscar* can attach track by track audio clips to each audio catalogue item displayed on the retailer's web site.

Because *WebOscar* is a completely integrated Epos and web publishing system, it is able to do this automatically according to simple rules defined by the retailer.

Examples of rules that the retailer might specify include "attach audio clips for items in my 'special promotion' category" or "attach audio clips for my best selling 100 albums".

## Oscar Head Office

Oscar Epos systems are designed to work as part of a larger network in multiple outlet situations and new facilities recently announced allow sophisticated comparative analysis of chain performance day by day.

Each satellite, or branch, store uses an Oscar Epos system to handle day-to-day sales, stock and order processing. At the end of each trading day, each satellite sends a full set of transaction data to a secure web server over the Internet.

At Head Office, a special Boscar (Back Office Oscar) unit accesses the web server and downloads the satellite data for analysis and displays results from satellite stores in the form of reports. Working in the reverse direction, Head Office sends updates on catalogue items and other subjects to the web server for distribution to satellites.

Oscar Head Office uses a database query language to construct detailed reports to the user's specific requirements.

The system contains a selection of standard reports including the following:

- Sales Reports
- Stock Reports
- Department Sales
- Key Activity
- Price Changes
- Sales Summary

Each report displays the chain in a 'landscape' format, showing data for individual satellites side by side.

Oscar Head Office also collects each till's 'Z' report and allows these to be inspected as required.



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## New for 2003

In this issue...

- **Oscar is evolving!** - *WebOscar* is an entirely new version of Oscar with built-in web site publication.
- **What is *WebOscar*?** - Please read on!
- **A New Vision** - customers can see right into your store.
- **Rules To Publish By** - The secret of *WebOscar* is the unique web publication rules engine, WPRE.
- **Stock on the Web** - Web site content can be linked directly to actual stock, giving customers real confidence.
- **New Information** - *WebOscar* provides many new descriptive fields for advanced applications.
- **Track Listings** - For the first time in Oscar, audio track information can be added to the data.
- **Play the Music!** - Audio tracks sampled and played on demand.
- **Audio on the Internet** - Sound clips added automatically to the web site.
- **How it works** - The details of how *WebOscar* transfers in store stock data to the real Internet.
- **Oscar Head Office** - Better information for multiple retailers.
- **Stop Press** - New EDI for orders with THE.

# Oscar is evolving

In this edition of 'News from Ranger', we announce *WebOscar*, an entirely new version of Ranger's highly successful Oscar Epos system.

Already established as the definitive Epos system for book and music retailers, Oscar is now installed in almost 200 retail stores throughout the UK and Ireland.

Oscar's success is based on a unique combination of technical excellence and unparalleled quality of back-up, allowing the retailer to get on with what he does best - retailing.

As the only system fully integrated with book bibliography and music databases, Oscar is already the market leader. Now, things just got better!



• 'Ranger Records and Books', <http://www.rangerrecords.co.uk/>  
Generated automatically by an Oscar Epos till, a world's first for Oscar.

Amongst the new features to be found in *WebOscar* are:

- **Automatic Web Publishing:** The biggest cost in web site operation is maintenance and Oscar automates the task of adding, removing and amending product listings.
- **Web Data:** To go with automatic web publishing, Oscar now provides an entirely new data structure with web-specific information in addition to many new fields for use both in store and on the net.
- **Audio on Demand:** For the first time in Epos, Oscar offers audio playback on

demand at both the point of sale and at dedicated listening posts. The same audio data can be automatically added to the retailer's web site.

- **Audio Sampling:** Most in-store audio schemes rely on expensive third-party content. While Oscar can use this data, the system also provides integrated and automatic sampling facilities, allowing the retailer to build up his own library. (Samples are automatically limited to 30 seconds per track to comply with copyright concerns).
- **Track Listings:** *WebOscar* includes facilities to add track data from commercial sources, publicly available web sites or by manual entry.
- **Pack Shots:** For the first time in an Epos system, *WebOscar* allows capture of cover images for books and CDs with automatic publication, of course.
- **Other Enhancements:** Together with a multitude of other Internet related features, *WebOscar* also contains new head office facilities for multiple retailers. These include better integration of branches and centre, and for the first time automated distribution of new product details.

stop press...stop press...  
EDI order placement with THE.

Oscar users can now place orders with Total Home Entertainment (THE) using Oscar's EDI ordering system. The ordering process is suitable for both books and music orders and provides individual line item acknowledgements.

Oscar users can already utilise EDI for order placement with wholesalers Bertrams and Gardner, as well as Whitaker Teleordering.

## What is WebOscar?

*WebOscar* is the latest member of the Oscar family, a logical but extremely innovative development in what is already one of the most advanced Epos systems anywhere.

*WebOscar* takes the logical step of 'publishing' a physical 'bricks and mortar' store on the Internet in an automatic process that requires little or no input from the retailer.

The effect of *WebOscar* is to throw open the doors of the store to the entire world, allowing anyone, anywhere, to see what stock is available at what prices.

## A New Vision

Have you ever wished that Internet surfers could 'see' the stock that you have in your shop? If they could literally 'see' your stock, how much more likely would they be to click that item and order it?

For a typical independent retailer, *WebOscar* already holds most of the information needed to build an accurate and timely web site in the form of stock records for 'over the counter' products.

By combining in store stock data with web specific information like web pricing, *WebOscar* automatically assembles a complete description of each item on the site.

*WebOscar* automatically determines which items to include on the site by applying 'publication rules' decided on by the retailer.

Product details published on the web site can include additional retailer specific details such as reviews and recommendations, while complimentary information like track listings, audio clips and cover shots can be added automatically.

## Rules To Publish By

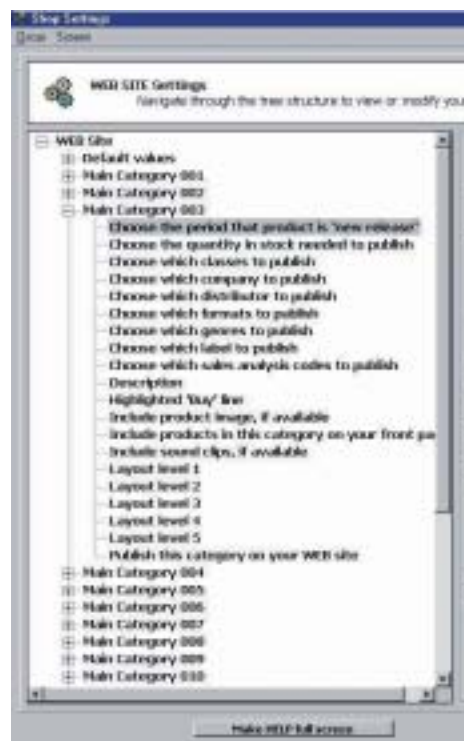
The key to *WebOscar* is the "Web Publishing Rules Engine" or **WPRE**.

**WPRE** works by applying user defined rules to each item, deciding automatically which items should appear on the site, and where in the site they should be.

**WPRE** is crucial to book and record retailers because it effortlessly handles the task of keeping up to date the details of huge numbers of constantly changing products.

If you would like to see a no-obligation demonstration of Oscar at your location, please contact Ranger for an appointment. We look forward to meeting you!

Rules are defined for each category or section of products listed in the web site and can easily be changed, as circumstances require. Below, you can see a typical **WPRE** setup page from *WebOscar*.



Here are some examples of web publishing rules:

- Publish the item in this section if it is new (you can choose how new).
- Publish the item in this section if a certain quantity are actually in stock.
- Publish the item in this section if its from a certain label, publisher or other source.

*WebOscar* allows web site categories to be added or amended as required, with the content of each section determined by rules that can easily be adapted.

The great power of **WPRE** ensures that every product that should be listed will appear in the correct part of the site, accurately described and linked both to the site index and the site search engine.

## Stock on the Web

Most e-commerce web sites are based around 'static' data that bears little relation to actual stock levels. Because *WebOscar* is an integral part of an Epos system, accurate stock information is available for every product.

Reports say that the single most common complaint amongst web site customers is order frustration caused by out of stock situations. Some reports even suggest that as many as 30% of web customers are frustrated in this way.

Customers are intelligent beings and studies show that a single bad shopping

experience can override numerous good events in the consumer's mind. By publishing details of real stock that really exists, *WebOscar* goes a long way to creating a stable and mutually beneficial buying relationship between retailer and consumer.

## New Information

Because Internet customers are not actually in the store, they expect to see rather more in the way of product information than is traditionally displayed on Epos screens.

Oscar's product information, already by far the most comprehensive of any Epos system available to independent retailers, is now greatly enhanced in *WebOscar*.

New facilities are provided for detailed information on classical music, including composer, orchestra and conductor. For books, space is provided for abstracts and reviews.



## Track Listings

When consumers enquire about a song title, they are often enquiring about the name of an album track rather than the title of the album.

Traditionally, it has been up to the knowledge and skill of the retailer to recognise the song title and link it to a specific album. Alternatively, he could refer to cumbersome electronic or paper reference works to try to track down the correct catalogue number for the item.

Now, Oscar can hold detailed track information for thousands of albums, simplifying and de-skilling the track searching process.

Oscar provides facilities for manual entry of track names or for copying them from commercial sources. Better still, in many cases *WebOscar* can obtain them automatically from publicly available Internet databases.



• Newcastle Independent Reflex CD list thousands of titles on their web site, <http://www.reflexcd.co.uk/>, produced with information from their Oscar Epos system.



## Play the Music!

While the prophets of doom would have us all believe the music retail industry is fast becoming an exclusively Internet based activity, real retailers know that real consumers prefer to browse real product in a real shop.

However, there is no reason why personal customers should not share in some of the technological benefits of Internet trading at the same time.

In particular, many customers prefer the 'hear before buy' approach and this process is often frustrating because of the limited samples available in conventional listening stations.

Now Oscar shows the way by allowing sound clips for virtually every stock item to be held in a central database, available on demand for anyone who wants to hear them!

Best of all, the choice of which clips to make available is not dependent on any third-party service.

By simply scanning the barcode on the CD cover, the consumer can immediately hear clips from each track, or select a track of his choice.

# How It works

(If you're already 'web savvy', you might want to skip this section. On the other hand...)

**Web Pages:** When you browse to a web page, you are viewing material provided to you over the Internet by one or more computers known as 'servers'. In an e-commerce site, these pages will contain detailed product descriptions, pictures and audio content. The pages might be 'hosted' on your own computer, or placed with a commercial provider somewhere on the Internet.

**Direct connection:** If you have an 'always on' Internet connection such as ADSL or cable modem, you might want to allow customers to browse direct to your own computer system. However, allowing this direct access is fraught with issues of security and performance, making the technique unsuitable for all but very specialised applications. Fortunately, the Internet is amply provided with third party servers, known as 'web hosting services', that are available at very modest cost.

**Web Hosting:** Internet shopping sites, usually known as 'e-commerce' sites, are almost always hosted on third party services – not just for cost reasons, but because third party providers have an economy of scale that allows them to provide 'bandwidth' (the diameter of the pipe linking the site to the consumer) suitable for numerous simultaneous transactions. Last but not least, their reliability (measured as a 'down time' that must not exceed a small number of hours in a year) is usually far better than can be achieved by a private server.

**Painless maintenance:** *WebOscar* is designed to 'upload' the site data to the hosting site at daily intervals, or more frequently if desired. This upload process consists of sending files containing both site content and layout information in industry standard formats using a built-in software application. To do this, the *WebOscar* system is supplied with a dial-up or ISDN Internet connection, although this is only required when uploading files or downloading orders. It is *WebOscar's* ability to upload automatically generated web site content that transforms the viability of e-commerce for the independent retailer from being labour intensive and error prone to becoming simple, routine and profitable.

**Web site structure:** An e-commerce site normally consists of three components:

- A catalogue, or database of products. *WebOscar* provides this content automatically by extracting it from the main databases using **WPRE**.
- A logical structure suitable for browsing, usually including a 'search engine'. *WebOscar* provides this structure by splitting content into sections that can be broad: ('all books') as well as narrow ('author: Ballard, J.G.').
- An order taking mechanism, usually called a 'shopping basket'. These are specific to the e-commerce application or provider but invariably feature a method for the consumer to build up an order and communicate the details to you by email or through a secure website.

**Site Name:** Of course, an important element of an e-commerce site is its Internet name, or 'URL' (Uniform Resource Locator). For instance, [www.rangercom.com](http://www.rangercom.com) is Ranger's own URL. It is worth giving a lot of thought to the URL and choosing the simplest and most memorable name possible. (A new Internet domain, anyname.shop offers intriguing possibilities for retailers). It is the URL that is known to millions of computers throughout the world and allows users to find you, wherever they are. URL's can be transferred between hosting services, allowing you to migrate from one type of service to another.

**Publishing on the web:** So how do you 'publish' your e-commerce web site on an Internet server? There are really just two ways:

- Adopt a commercial e-commerce package (really a word processor for an Internet shopping site), design the site and transfer the result to any of thousands of hosting services.
- Contract with an e-commerce specialist for a package solution that normally includes design, maintenance and quite often, hosting on the provider's own servers.

**e-commerce roadmap:** So how to decide which route is best for you? Of course, you may already have an established site in one of these categories. But if you don't, *WebOscar* provides the choices that you need.

- If you are new to the Internet and have modest ambitions (typically less than a thousand different products on the site) then an e-commerce package will be an economical solution. *WebOscar* has been developed with various budgets in mind and our entry level product will provide you with a basic feature set that will get you trading on the internet quickly.
- For more advanced applications, we can build bespoke applications that can be tailored completely around your business requirements with an extensive and rich feature set.
- If you already have an e-commerce web site, Ranger can often provide data compatibility direct from Oscar to the site, or arrange for transfer of the existing content and URL to one of the above solutions.

**Customer payments – what it's all for:** The final issue to consider is how customer's orders will be funded. A popular mis-conception about e-commerce is that a site must have on-line credit card payment facilities, and the types of site described above both feature this option. However, on-line credit card payment commission charges are significant and since the payment is taken at source, any problem in fulfilling the order will lead to expensive and time consuming refund procedures.

Because of this, you may prefer to receive orders prior to payment being made and the systems described here offer secure means for you to access orders and bill customers at the point of despatch.

**In conclusion:** It is certainly possible to build and maintain an e-commerce web site using manual methods. Actually, it is far easier to build the site than to maintain it. However, *WebOscar* transforms web site viability for fast moving book and music product because it maintains the product information automatically, forming a 'virtuous circle' of accurate product data leading to satisfied orders leading to further enquiries. This allows e-commerce to become a profitable compliment to an existing retail business, rather than a commercial Cinderella!